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## 2 INTRODUCTION

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### COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE

The City's commitment to a community where people come first is demonstrated through recognition of the importance of people in the planning process and the importance of a decision-making process whereby differences of opinion are recognized and resolved in a spirit of respect, openness, and trust. The commitment to people is borne out in the City's assumption of the responsibility to provide land and opportunity for education, employment, and housing for its present and future residents. The plan for using land is efficient, and meets human needs in a concise settlement pattern in order to maximize preservation of the surrounding farmland and wetland in the Pajaro Valley. Provision of the opportunity for housing to be built for all income groups, with priority given to housing for lower-income households again demonstrates the City's commitment to its people. The emphasis on people is clearly articulated in the set of policies focusing on improving the quality of life for the city's children and youth.

In addition to the commitments noted above, the plan to make Watsonville a livable city for all of its residents calls for improved recreation, transportation and public facilities - making the living environment fun, accessible and efficient. Other important commitments in the General Plan are reduction of the risk of hazards to an acceptable level - minimizing loss of life, injury and economic damage, and maintenance of the city's link with the past through the preservation of its rich historical and cultural resources.

### REGIONAL SETTING

Watsonville, California is located in the Pajaro Valley in southern Santa Cruz County, shown in Figure 2-1. The city is centrally located between the Santa Cruz Mountains, five miles to the northeast, and the Pacific Ocean, three miles to the southwest. Watson-

ville is the urban hub of Pajaro Valley which is primarily agricultural. The topography varies within the Planning Area and includes level areas and gently rolling farmlands.

Five small lakes (Pinto, College, Kelly, Drew and Tynan) are located near the city's northern and eastern borders. The city is bounded by Corralitos Creek to the north, Salsipuedes Creek to the east, and the Pajaro River to the south. The Pajaro River is also the boundary between Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. Several small creeks and sloughs (Watsonville Slough, Struve Slough, and West Struve Slough) are present in the city and extend to the south and west of Highway 1.

### CLIMATE

The climate of the Watsonville Planning Area makes it ideal for both human habitation and agriculture. Temperature extremes are rare and experienced for only short durations. They range from lows of 28 degrees F. to highs of 95 degrees F. Typical temperatures range from 50 to 70 degrees F., and the mild Mediterranean type climate provides a long crop-growing season of about 237 days per year.

Rainfall increases with distance inland from the Monterey Bay. The average annual rainfall in the Planning Area is 21 inches. Ninety percent of all precipitation occurs between November and April with February being the wettest month. Prevailing wind direction is from the southwest (Monterey Bay) with an average wind speed of 8 MPH.

### WATSONVILLE'S ROLE IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Watsonville serves as the urban center for south Santa Cruz County, providing a full range of services - shopping, housing, jobs, recreation and government services. Watsonville is the second largest city in the County overall and provides significant

support housing, processing, and transportation facilities to the agricultural base of Santa Cruz County. In addition, Watsonville has long been active in the preservation of significant environmental resources, including hundreds of acres of open space, parks, sloughs and wetlands, and coastal zone lands (totalling 350 acres in 1992, which occupy approximately 9 percent of the total land area of the city).

Watsonville has provided noteworthy development densities within its existing City limits. Its growth has been compact and orderly. According to the 1990 Census, Watsonville has 5,253 persons per square mile, exceeded in Santa Cruz County only by Capitola (6,281). By comparison, the City of Santa Cruz has 3,678 persons per square mile. *Watsonville 2005* plans for an additional 2,100 housing units to be added in the current City limits and Freedom, resulting in over 6,000 persons per square mile for Watsonville and Freedom, rapidly approaching Capitola densities during the time frame of the General Plan (1992-2005).

Watsonville can be proud of its accomplishments in providing affordable housing and in addressing the needs of the Hispanic community. However, significant housing and living wage problems still exist. Part of the solution for affordable housing and job creation is an adequate supply of land to meet the city's needs. If Watsonville's ability to grow is limited, so is its ability to continue to provide significant affordable housing, housing for large and extended families, and living wage employment to the residents of the community.

A situation where there is a shortage of land to meet the needs of the population hinders both agriculture and the overall social, environmental, and economic status of the County. Farmworkers are becoming less migrant, and many choose to settle in an area. They will not be able to select Santa Cruz County if they cannot find reasonable housing and opportunities to augment farmworker wages to provide year-round support for their families. The survival of agriculture in the Pajaro Valley depends upon an adequate supply of agricultural workers, facilities to process and store food products, and a transportation system to move agricultural goods. Without workers,

processing facilities, and transportation, agriculture in the Pajaro Valley cannot survive.

In order to understand Watsonville as a city, it is important to understand some basic statistics about Watsonville:

- Watsonville provides a living environment for a significant portion of the County's low-income population, Hispanic population, and farm worker population. The total population of Watsonville comprises 14 percent of the overall County; however, 40 percent of the County's Hispanic residents live in Watsonville. In 1990, the median family income in Watsonville was \$31,160, while the 1990 median family income for the entire County was \$43,130.
- Watsonville provides a significant portion of the affordable housing in Santa Cruz County. The 1990 Census reported 21 percent of the owner housing in Santa Cruz County is valued below \$200,000. Sixty-one percent of the owner housing in Watsonville is valued below \$200,000. Forty percent of the housing in the County is renter occupied with a median contract rent of \$651, while 52 percent of the housing in Watsonville is renter occupied with a median contract rent of \$557.
- Watsonville has an average household size of 3.24 compared with 2.66 in the County. Twenty-six percent of all households in Watsonville are classified by the Census as overcrowded compared with 9 percent for the County. Thirty-three percent of all overcrowded units in the County are in Watsonville. The reasons for the large household size are twofold: (1) it is common in Watsonville for families to have many children, and (2) low wages and comparably high housing costs force families to double-up.
- Overcrowding occurs more frequently in rental housing than in ownership housing. Of all renter-occupied units in Watsonville, 39 percent are classified as overcrowded with more than one person per room, and 13 percent of the owner-occupied units are overcrowded. The comparable figures for Santa Cruz County are 15 percent and 5 percent, respectively.
- In 1990, 61 percent of the population of Watsonville was Hispanic, and 77 percent of the

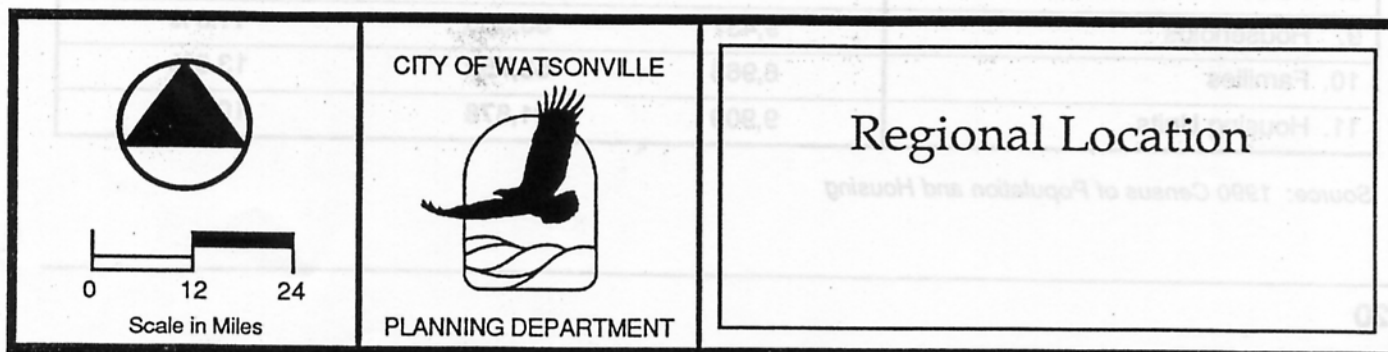
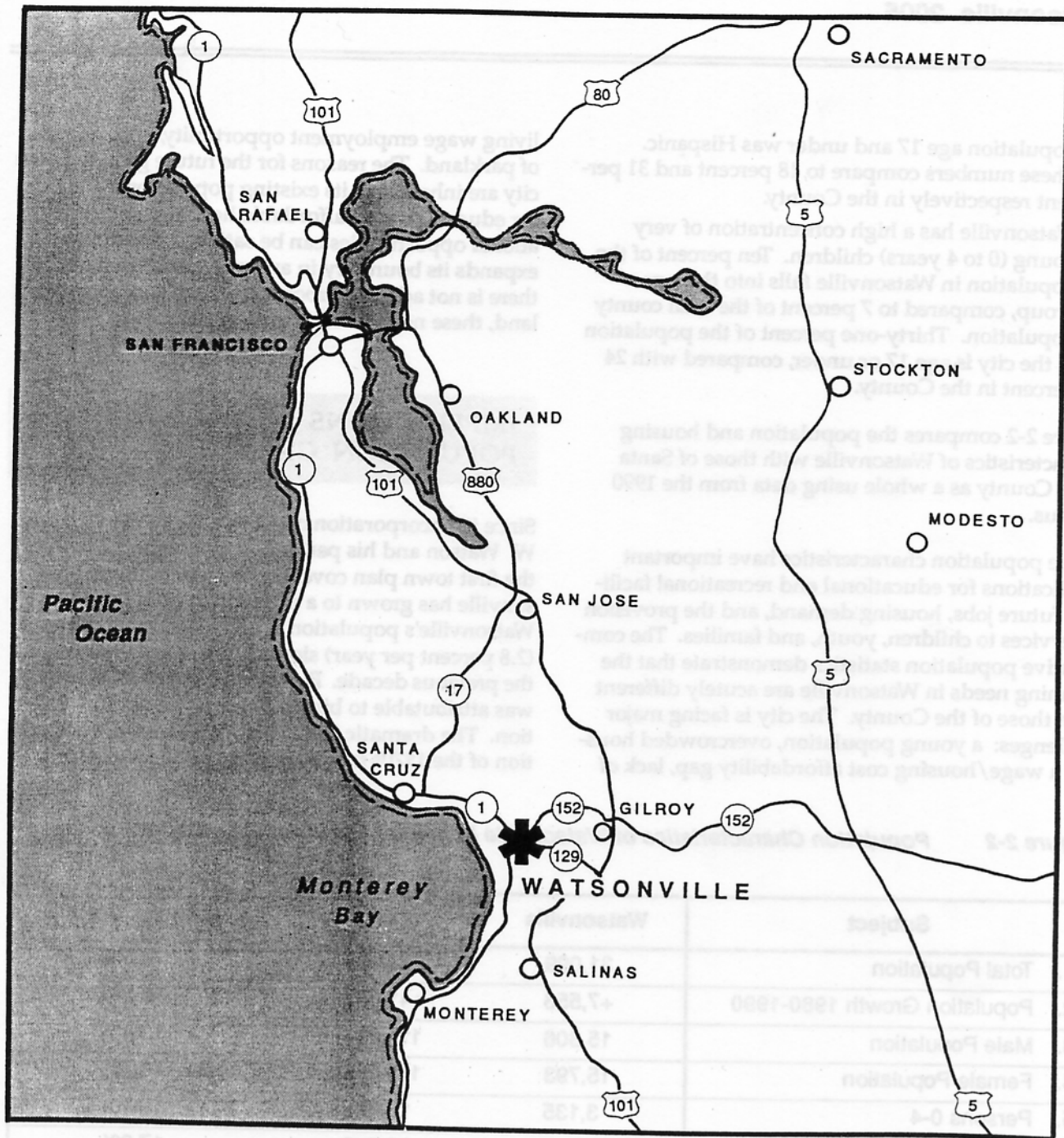


Figure 2-1



population age 17 and under was Hispanic. These numbers compare to 18 percent and 31 percent respectively in the County.

- Watsonville has a high concentration of very young (0 to 4 years) children. Ten percent of the population in Watsonville falls into this age group, compared to 7 percent of the total county population. Thirty-one percent of the population in the city is age 17 or under, compared with 24 percent in the County.

Figure 2-2 compares the population and housing characteristics of Watsonville with those of Santa Cruz County as a whole using data from the 1990 Census.

These population characteristics have important implications for educational and recreational facilities, future jobs, housing demand, and the provision of services to children, youth, and families. The comparative population statistics demonstrate that the planning needs in Watsonville are acutely different from those of the County. The city is facing major challenges: a young population, overcrowded housing, a wage/housing cost affordability gap, lack of

living wage employment opportunity, and a deficit of parkland. The reasons for the future growth of the city are inherent in its existing population. The need for education, jobs, affordable housing, and recreational opportunities can be satisfied if the city expands its boundary in an appropriate manner. If there is not adequate room for expansion on suitable land, these needs simply will not be met.

### IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT POPULATION GROWTH

Since its incorporation on March 30, 1868 when John W. Watson and his partner, D. S. Gregory, laid out the first town plan covering one square mile, Watsonville has grown to a population of 31,099 (1990). Watsonville's population growth rate in the 1980s (2.8 percent per year) slowed from the 4.9 percent of the previous decade. Between 1980 and 1990, growth was attributable to births, deaths, and net in-migration. The dramatic increase in Watsonville's population of the 1970s included those same factors, but

**Figure 2-2 Population Characteristics of Watsonville In Relation to Santa Cruz County: 1990**

Subject	Watsonville	County	Percent of County
1. Total Population	31,099	229,734	13.5%
2. Population Growth 1980-1990	+7,556	+41,593	18.2%
3. Male Population	15,306	114,205	13.4%
4. Female Population	15,793	115,529	13.7%
5. Persons 0-4	3,135	16,456	19.1%
6. Persons 5-17	6,584	38,248	17.2%
7. Persons 18-64	17,475	149,164	11.7%
8. Persons 65 or older	3,905	25,866	15.1%
9. Households	9,437	83,566	11.3%
10. Families	6,963	53,752	13.0%
11. Housing Units	9,909	91,878	10.8%

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing



also included annexation of nearby populated areas. Given the current population growth, it is likely that the remaining supply of vacant land zoned for residential use within the City limits will be fully developed by the mid 1990s.

During the 1980s, the ethnic composition and age composition of the city changed significantly. According to the Census, the city's Hispanic residents increased from 49 percent of the city's population in 1980 to 61 percent in 1990. The city's population as a whole grew a total of 32 percent during the 1980s. The age group 5 through 17 year olds grew 46 percent, indicating significant increases in the numbers of young people in the community. People age 65 and over grew only 2 percent, meaning that, although they are an important portion of the city's population, they were a shrinking segment during the 1980s. The remaining age groups grew at a rate consistent with the population as a whole.

In 1980, 29 percent of the city's population was 17 years old or younger. In 1990, 31 percent of the city's population was 17 years old or younger. The large proportion of residents age 17 and younger in Watsonville has important implications for planning.

Most of the young people will reach child bearing age during the time horizon of this general plan, the year 2005. The youth must receive the kind of education that will equip them to provide for themselves and their newly formed families. Elementary and secondary schools, trade schools, junior and community colleges, and four-year colleges should be encouraged to locate in and near Watsonville making education readily accessible.

Between 1990 and 2005, total employment in the United States is projected to increase by 20 percent, or by 24.6 million jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' moderate growth scenarios for the U.S. economy.<sup>1</sup> A study concerning the structure of occupational employment in the United States over the 1990-2005 period found a continuing, above-average growth rate for jobs that require relatively high levels of education or training. "This is

reflected primarily in the increasing proportions of executive, administrative, and managerial workers; professional specialty occupations; and technicians and related support occupations. These three major occupational groups, which represented just over one-fourth of total employment in 1990, are expected to account for 41 percent of the increase in employment between 1990 and 2005. Thus, while the broad occupational structure is projected to change slowly, the trend is in the direction of more jobs among those occupational groups with higher skills."<sup>2</sup>

Young people who do not have a high school diploma are at a decided disadvantage in the job market and have fewer opportunities for job advancement than those who obtain a high school education. Studies<sup>3</sup>, which compare the employment of those with and without a high school diploma in the occupations of managers, professionals and technicians, show that, although opportunities for high school graduates are limited, the proportion of those who earned a high school diploma is more than twice that of those who did not earn a diploma. This was the case for both the age group 16 to 24 who had little, or no job experience, as well as for the older age group 25 to 34 who had job experience. In addition, those without high school diplomas earned below-average median weekly earnings.

Between 1990 and 2005, the city's labor force participation rate can be expected to grow for two reasons. First, the large group, age 5 through 17 years, who were not in the labor force in 1990, can be expected to enter the work force. Second, the labor force participation rates for Hispanic women is expected to increase, although this participation rate is projected to continue to remain lower than that for all women.

The large number of young people projected to be added to Watsonville's labor force means that public policy should emphasize education and employment opportunities in Watsonville for the benefit of Watsonville's labor force. Policies which address these needs are in the Land Use and Community Development chapter (4), the Housing chapter (6), the Chil-

1. Lukasiewicz, John and Silvestri, George, *Occupational Employment Projections*, Monthly Labor Review, v114, No. 11, November, 1991

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

dren and Youth chapter (7), and the Public Facilities chapter (11). Entry-level and mid-level employment opportunities are vital to the youth and older inhabitants of the area.

Day care is essential to enable youth to continue in school and to take their place in the work force. Day care is also important in supporting the increasing number of women joining the work force and in supporting single-head-of-household families.

A young community, in particular, needs space for recreation. A strong need for parkland and recreation has been voiced by the community and has been studied by the Parks and Recreation Commission in 1991. The 1992 *Parks and Open Space Master Plan* addresses the shortage of parkland and identifies alternative sites for new neighborhood and community parks. Sufficient parkland to both compensate for the existing shortage and provide for the future population is included in the projected supply of land needed by the city.

## GENERAL PLAN PURPOSE

*Watsonville 2005* is a statement of policy for the physical development of Watsonville that provides a realistic vision of the future. As such, it represents the City's position on the character, quality, and timing of new development. The Plan does not specify every detail of community change, rather it defines a broad path to be followed in managing growth and change in the coming decades. It endeavors to be sensitive to all people in Watsonville, to conserve and protect natural and cultural resources, and to restrict development in hazardous areas.

It is the intent of the General Plan to: anticipate the changes that Watsonville will face, provide guidelines for preserving environmental resources, generate economic stability, and maintain an acceptable level of public services and facilities. The General Plan is a tool to direct the costs and benefits associated with community development, and to mitigate any effects on the existing community.



Photo: Courtesy of the Register-Pajaronian

Dancers from Calabasas School entertain the crowd at the Plaza in Watsonville during a *Fiestas Patrias* (Mexican Independence Day) celebration.



*Watsonville 2005* is a document for use by decision makers to evaluate proposals from the public and private sectors. It is also a document to be used by the community to better understand and participate in future community development decisions. Thus, the Plan is both a tool to be used in city government and an educational document to be used by the community.

## GENERAL PLAN ORGANIZATION

The California Government Code requires that every city and county prepare, adopt, and implement a general plan for community development. The general plan must include: a statement of development policies; text setting forth objectives, principles, standards and plan proposals; and supporting diagrams. There are seven mandatory elements required by state law – land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety – which may be organized in any way as long as all required topics are addressed.

The City of Watsonville has updated and revised its existing General Plan to provide policies that reflect current community concerns and that guide community development decisions through the year 2005.

*Watsonville 2005* consists of twelve chapters, a land use diagram, a glossary, appendices, and a complete Housing Element, that address both the state-mandated planning subjects plus optional subjects that are of particular concern to the city. Goals and policies reflect the results of an intensive investigation of land use and community development issues facing the city and its surrounding environment. Implementation measures are designed to carry out these goals and policies.

The twelve chapters of *Watsonville 2005* are:

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Growth and Conservation Strategy
4. Land Use and Community Development
5. Urban Design and Scenic Resources

6. Housing: Goals, Policies, and Programs
7. Children and Youth
8. Recreation and Parks
9. Environmental Resource Management
10. Transportation and Circulation
11. Public Facilities and Services
12. Public Safety

The relationship between the state-mandated subjects and the chapters of *Watsonville 2005* in which they are addressed, is shown in Figure 2-3 at the end of the chapter.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The 1992 revised General Plan has been prepared under the provisions of California Government Code, Section 65300 et. seq. It is a comprehensive document that addresses the physical development of the community, the environmental resources and constraints associated with the Watsonville Planning Area, and the social and economic concerns of the population.

## RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

The General Plan was created cooperatively with the residents of the Watsonville Planning Area. Resident input was incorporated through a step-by-step process. This approach builds upon a long tradition of active resident participation in community development.

In June 1986 the City formed a General Plan Steering Committee. The Committee's task was to review the individual components that now constitute *Watsonville 2005*. In addition, the Committee's goals were to evaluate current planning policies, identify planning issues of community concern, and survey community opinions on present conditions and future aspirations. The Steering Committee was formed with two members from each of the following groups: City Council, Planning Commission, Design Review Commission, and Recreation and Parks Commission.



Public concerns were documented through a series of General Plan workshops, opinion surveys, monthly study session meetings, and the public hearing process. Public opinion profiles based on these activities have been compiled and are available at the Watsonville Planning Department along with other reference materials used in formulation of this Plan. Each chapter of the General Plan contains a brief summary of community concerns expressed by the general public and the Steering Committee. These quality-of-life concerns have been used to help identify the long-term goals and policies which are outlined at the end of each chapter.

In October 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake caused significant damage in Watsonville. The city's residents worked on recovering from the earthquake, suspending the update of the General Plan until the second half of 1991. Many of the issues of short- and long-term recovery – housing, economic vitality, adequate infrastructure – are taken up as major themes of the General Plan. Thus the General Plan becomes the long-range recovery plan for the City of Watsonville.

By late 1991, much of the information from the 1990 Census was available, which provided an opportunity to verify trends. More public hearings were held; the City Council provided direction on the growth alternatives; and the 1992 draft General Plan was prepared.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a public informational document used by government agencies to analyze the significant environmental effects of a proposed project. It must identify alternatives and discuss feasible ways to reduce or avoid the potential environmental damage associated with the project.

The EIR for the General Plan is a separate document from *Watsonville 2005*, however the proposed mitigation measures in the EIR reflect the General Plan policies and implementing measures. Both documents, *Watsonville 2005* and the EIR, are segments of a complete environmental planning process. They guide community development and provide a tool for

evaluating the long term consequences of this development.

### ADOPTION

Upon adoption by the City Council, *Watsonville 2005* became the official policy guide for managing future growth and development. In that respect it can be viewed as a "constitution" for the physical development and environmental resource protection of Watsonville.

### CARRYING OUT THE GENERAL PLAN

A city's general plan is at the apex of its land use regulations, with other land use regulations subordinated to the general plan and required to be consistent with it. The zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations are two of the key measures which implement a general plan. Implementation of a general plan also occurs on a day-to-day basis through a city's land use decisions related to development projects, subdivision maps, redevelopment plans, public works projects, and approvals of specific plans.

The programs and assumptions in a general plan should be monitored and their status reported to the City Council annually. This informs the Council about progress toward accomplishing goals and provides an opportunity to confirm assumptions.

### CHANGING THE GENERAL PLAN

General plans are living documents capable of being changed as community values change, as regulations of other levels of government change, and as unforeseen circumstances occur. State law provides a formal process for amending the general plan. General plan amendments can occur when found to be appropriate by the City Council; however, in order to preclude casual or too frequent amendments, state law allows each mandatory element to be amended not more than four times a year. Each amendment may include an unlimited number of changes to an element and yet be considered as a single amendment if adopted as a single action by the City Council.

Amendments to a general plan must be consistent with the rest of the general plan. Therefore, a proposed amendment may entail changes to several elements in order to maintain internal consistency which is required by state law.

A housing element must be updated every five years as required by state law. The next time the Watsonville Housing Element is required by the State of California to be updated is 1996. The entire Watsonville General Plan should be reviewed and updated at least by the year 2005, and earlier if appropriate.

## GOAL

### Goal 2.1 Planning for People

Involve the community to assure that the decisions made by the City of Watsonville regarding planning and development are in the best interest of the people of Watsonville.

## POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The following policies serve to guide the implementation of the long-term goal stated above.

### Policy 2.A Community Participation

The City shall encourage the participation of its residents in the planning process and the development of the community.

#### Implementation Measures

- 2.A.1 Long Range Planning** – The City shall utilize a range of public participation methods to involve the community in the initial development and updating of major plans including the General Plan, Downtown Design Plan, Scenic Corridor Plan, and Parks and Recreation Plan.

- 2.A.2 Public Hearings** – The City shall, at a minimum, notify all affected parties and property owners of consideration by the City Council and Planning Commission of General Plan amendments, rezonings, and special use permits, in accordance with the requirements of state law and local ordinance. Other items relating to ordinances and development guidelines shall be publicly noticed in newspapers and through local agency mailing lists to ensure a general public awareness of proposed policy changes.

- 2.A.3 Resident Committees and Commissions** – The City shall utilize ongoing commissions and limited term committees of community members to represent the public in the efforts of the City to maintain and enhance the city's quality of life.

- 2.A.4 Bilingual Programing** – The City shall develop improved community outreach programs to ensure participation by all of the city's residents. This shall include Spanish language noticing, informational brochures, and local radio and television public affairs programming.

- 2.A.5 Staff Assistance** – When requested by community members, the City shall share the expertise of its staff to address community needs.

### Policy 2.B Decision Making

The City shall foster a sense of community cohesion in the way diverse opinions are resolved. Decisions shall be made in a spirit of respect, openness, and trust.

#### Implementation Measures

- 2.B.1 Innovative Community Involvement** – The City shall go out into the community and seek ideas of community members, and assist community members in forming workable solutions to address the community's needs.

**2.B.2 Conflict Management** – The City shall manage conflict in a constructive way by recognizing the diversity of opinions and by including people with a wide range of opinions on resident committees and commissions.

**Planning for People  
Goal and Policies**

		Policies	
		2A	2B
Goal	2.1	.	.

Both policies implement the goal as shown above.

**Figure 2-3 Relationship Between Watsonville 2005 and State-Mandated Elements**

MANDATED ELEMENTS	CHAPTERS IN WATSONVILLE 2005											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Land Use				✓								
Circulation										✓		
Housing						✓						
Conservation									✓			
Open Space								✓	✓			
Noise												✓
Safety										✓	✓	✓
<b>OPTIONAL SUBJECTS</b>												
Children							✓					
Urban Design					✓							
Scenic Routes					✓							
Archeological Resources									✓			
Recreation and Parks								✓				
Air and Water Quality									✓		✓	
Public Services											✓	